

## Postcard

## An epidemiological analysis of drunk driving accidents in Kagawa Prefecture – Comparison of 1997–2000 and 2003–2006

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### Abstract

In this study, we examined the number of drunk driving accidents and drunk driving accident toll in 1997–2000 and 2003–2006 for Kagawa Prefecture, which had Japan's highest number of traffic accident fatalities per 100,000 population.

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Media reports in recent years have indicated that Japan's traffic accident fatalities are decreasing. In 2001, traffic accident fatalities per 100,000 population in Japan totalled 6.87; the highest number of fatalities, 13.1, occurred in Kagawa Prefecture. Traffic accidents are caused by numerous factors, one of which is drunk driving. In many countries around the world, automobiles are necessity. Auto accidents have increased as automobiles have become more widespread, and countermeasures to reduce automobile accident fatalities are crucial.<sup>1</sup> Many of the world's developed countries have devised countermeasures from a variety of perspectives, and traffic accident fatalities are decreasing. Rules on drunk driving have played a major role in this reduction in traffic accident fatalities.<sup>1</sup> In Japan, the Road Traffic Law was amended in 2001, and penalties for driving while under the influence and driving while intoxicated were stiffened. In 2002, the Order to Enforce the Road Traffic Law was amended; criteria for driving while under the influence and driving while intoxicated were made stricter and points for infractions,

which govern suspension or revocation of one's driver's license, were increased. That is, drunk driving accidents are currently one area in which the police and government bodies are vigorously implementing preventive measures. The current study examined the number of drunk driving accidents and drunk driving accident toll in 1997–2000 and 2003–2006 for Kagawa Prefecture, which had Japan's highest number of traffic accident fatalities per 100,000 population. The study also studied the effects of the Road Traffic Law and Order to Enforce the Road Traffic Law and considered future measures to prevent drunk driving accidents.

During the first four-year period (1997–2000), there were 1154 drunk driving accidents and the drunk driving accident toll reached 1562. During the second four-year period (2003–2006), there were 963 drunk driving accidents and the drunk driving accident toll reached 1415.

Comparing the two four-year periods indicated that in Kagawa Prefecture, which had Japan's highest number of traffic accident fatalities per 100,000 population, the number of drunk driving accidents decreased during the second four-year period by 47.75 accidents a year from the number in the first period. Similarly, the drunk driving accident toll decreased by 36.75 deaths a year.

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The present study indicated the effects of the Road Traffic Law and the Order to Enforce the Road Traffic Law on drunk driving accidents. While many researchers have previously indicated the risk of traffic accidents due to drunk driving, drunk driving accidents have yet to end.<sup>2–4</sup> In recent years, Japan has witnessed the establishment of the daiko, or substitute driver, system and the spread of busing for parties. Countermeasures of police, administrative bodies, and the medical establishment to prevent drunk driving accidents should be implemented, addresses about preventing drunk driving should be made to citizens of local communities, and further countermeasures to prevent drunk driving accidents should be implemented by police, administrative bodies, the medical establishment, commu-

nities, and citizens in concert in order for citizens to be aware that they should not drive drunk.

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